CHAPTER 2.5.14.

AFRICAN HORSE SICKNESS

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Article 2.5.14.3.

AHSV seasonally free zone

1. An AHSV seasonally free *zone* is a part of an infected country or *zone* for which for part of a year, ongoing surveillance and *monitoring* demonstrate no evidence of AHSV transmission and of the presence of adult *Culicoides* likely to be competent AHSV vectors.

2. For the application of Articles 2.5.14.6., 2.5.14.8. and 2.5.14.9., the seasonally free period is:

   a) taken to commence the day following the last evidence of AHSV transmission and of the cessation of activity of adult *Culicoides* likely to be competent AHSV vectors as demonstrated by an ongoing surveillance programme, and

   b) taken to conclude either:

      i) at least 28 days before the earliest date that historical data show AHSV activity has recommenced; or

      ii) immediately when current climatic data or data from a surveillance and monitoring programme indicate an earlier resurgence of activity of adult *Culicoides* likely to be competent AHSV vectors.

3. An AHSV seasonally free *zone* will not lose its free status through the importation of vaccinated or seropositive equidae, their semen, oocytes or embryos from infected countries or *zones*, provided these imports are carried out in accordance with this chapter.

General Comment: providing adequate proof of a "seasonally free zone" for African horse sickness (AHS) may be very difficult. Sinclair and co-authors (J.S. Afr. Vet. Assoc. 2006, 77(4):191-196) provided evidence during the 2004 outbreak of the disease in the Stellenbosch area, that transmission by *Culicoides* species continued to take place even when ambient temperatures were below 15°C. In that same study, it was shown that many of the horses in the surveillance zone of the Western Cape Province were vaccinated against AHS, thus compromising their value as a sentinel population should infection be introduced into the surveillance zone. Regardless of the effectiveness of a surveillance program, it will very likely not detect any early AHS activity in an equid population that has a high level background of vaccine induced immunity to the disease.